

# Living up to standards : interoperability governance and standards adoption in government information networks

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## PROPOSITIONS ACCOMPANYING THE THESIS

### “Living up to Standards – Interoperability Governance and Standards Adoption in Government Information Networks”

by Florian Henning

1. Our world is becoming increasingly interconnected and characterised by complex and information-intense policy problems that require increased collaboration and (electronic) information exchange among networks of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. Standards-based interoperability is an essential enabler for harnessing the potential of such Government Information Networks - but one that is difficult to achieve.
2. A formal decision of an organisation to adopt a standard is by no means a guarantee that it will actually be adopted and complied with. The process of standards adoption is too long and complex, involving too many actors and influence factors to be taking such decisions at face value.
3. In order to leverage the potential public value of Government Information Networks, we need to understand what the processes, actors, drivers and barriers are behind standards adoption, and how the governance on interoperability in such networks should be given shape.
4. Standards adoption in Government Information Networks is affected by a wide range of determinants. The key areas summarising these factors are the decision-making structure governing the standards, the characteristics of a network itself and of its external environment, the efforts required for adopting the standards and the results from adopting them, the capacity and needs of the adopting organisations, and the characteristics of the standards to be adopted.
5. Whilst both the academic and policy literature is often preoccupied with the technological dimension of interoperability, in practice it is about much more than mere technological standardisation, and a holistic perspective is needed instead which includes the dimensions of technological, semantic and organisational interoperability.
6. Whilst government information sharing can be an important tool for policy responses to complex problems, an active discussion engaging all stakeholders concerned is necessary about its potential negative consequences.
7. Individual public policy domains can have significantly diverse characteristics. Whilst grand theories have their value, policy-makers in individual domains need theories that reflect this diversity and hence are better suited to provide concrete guidance for policy-making in their policy domain.
8. It is essential for interoperability governance to take a context-sensitive approach and align itself with key characteristics of the network. In particular, networks of higher complexity require more centralised interoperability governance, especially with regard to the decision-making on standards and the enforcement of such decisions. However, the degree of such centralisation is bound to be limited by the increased coordination costs that more centralisation implies.
9. Writing a dissertation has a lot in common with endurance sport. Among other things, both are a matter of proper training, time management, persistence and especially of having great supporters.